



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The American Sign Language and English  
Secondary School**

**Middle-High School 047**

**225 East 23 Street  
New York  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Dr Martin Florsheim**

**Dates of review: May 27- 28, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Helen Donnellan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The American Sign Language and English Secondary School is a middle and high school with 199 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 34% Black, 51% Hispanic, 11% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 0.5% English language learners and 37% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 86.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Seven of the 45 deaf students are taught within general education classes and the remainder in self-contained classes. Thirty special education hearing students with learning and emotional disabilities are taught in the general education classes. All class sizes are limited to a maximum of 20 students. All students receive instruction in American Sign Language.

The school shares a building with two other schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- American Sign Language enhances the curriculum for hearing students and allows deaf students to access the curriculum.
- The curriculum provides all students with opportunities to participate in visual art and physical education.
- General and special education students work together in an inclusive educational setting.
- Data is gathered regularly from standardized and teacher-developed assessments to give a picture of the performance of individual students.
- Staff are beginning to collaborate and are better informed about whole-school priorities and the areas where the school needs to improve.
- Attendance has increased as a result of effective outreach work to students and their families.
- The school staff works well with external organizations to provide unified services for students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Establish a structured whole-school plan, with time-related and objectively measurable outcomes, interim benchmarks and ways to monitor progress.
- Use data to set measurable and time-related goals and plans to improve all students' learning and instruction.
- Analyze all assessment data to give a clear picture of subject, class and grade level progress and performance.
- Use data analyses to highlight patterns and variations in learning outcomes for different groups of students to assist in setting school and student goals.
- Link the outcomes of formal and informal observations with school priorities and use this to inform the content of future professional development.
- Ensure that all teachers use data consistently to plan differentiated instruction that meets the needs of all their students, including the higher-achievers.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made little progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The school prides itself on knowing all its students well as individuals through a combination of formal and informal assessments and close knowledge of all of them. The knowledge of individual student progress and performance is not mirrored in the school's understanding of group or subgroup as it is a school policy not to compare data. This considerably limits insights into patterns and trends in student progress and performance and the progress the school has made since the previous Quality Review. The gymnasium is now in use and physical education in place. This is the issue where most improvements are evident.

The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan are not sufficiently precise to allow rigorous monitoring of progress. The use of data to set measurable goals for instruction and learning is limited. As a result students are not challenged consistently and their progress is restricted. Whole-class teaching is used extensively which results in some individual needs not being met. The inquiry team's work on exploring models for conferencing with students has yet to reach any definite conclusions. Instruction has begun to be monitored but there is no structure for feedback with sharply written areas of strength and improvement defining specific professional development. A full-time coach now offers professional development but this does not link to formal plans for teacher development. Some of the staff show initiative and are exploring models with which to set goals and assessments relevant to the student population.

The school arranges the curriculum successfully so that deaf and hearing students work side-by-side to access subject content and learn American Sign Language. The students also gain insights into the deaf culture and community through the school's partnerships with organizations in the community. Staff have recently begun to meet formally in teams which allow them to be better informed about school priorities. Planning and goal setting is limited and not focused at all levels. This limits the capacity of the school to plan and introduce successful changes and monitor the impact and progress of those changes.

### **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is underdeveloped.**

The school is clear that the focus of data is to gain a full understanding of the progress and performance of students as individuals. Teachers maintain records to show progress in class assessments and formal test results for students in all their classes. They make

effective use of the Stanford reading assessment to measure the reading levels of deaf students through the year. Currently the school does not use its data on student and class progress and performance to identify variations in learning outcomes for different groups of students. The principal stands firm in his judgment that it is not possible to carry out meaningful comparisons of student progress and performance of students, classes and sub-groups within the school or with subgroups of students at other schools. Because of this scant comparative data, the school does not have a full understanding of students' strengths and areas where they need to improve.

Analytical tools are underused and most information is presented in raw scores with no analyses to highlight key points. Consequently, teachers and school leaders face unduly laborious work to understand patterns and trends. Equally, student achievement is hindered. For instance, English language arts test scores for 2008 show that grade 8 students made no progress above their grade 7 levels. The reasons for this are not clear owing to the weakness in analyzing and using data.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

Recently the principal established weekly collaborative meetings for middle and high school teachers. While teachers use these to plan future instruction and identify their professional development needs, they are not used to set explicit goals for students. Some teachers have taken the initiative and developed formats for setting goals with their students. This is a good starting point but is not consistent practice across the school. Not all general education or English language learner students have goals. Special education teachers use the goals in students' individual education plans carefully as the basis for their instruction, which ensures that instruction meets the mandated needs. The goals set for students do not always link with whole-school goals. They lack coherence and measurable timeframes and do not reflect systematic planning. Not all students feel that they are sufficiently challenged, as there is a lack of rigor in setting goals for instruction and learning. Currently, data is not organized efficiently to identify areas where additional intervention is needed either to extend or reinforce instruction. Teachers give students verbal or signed prompts about how to improve but neglect to use focused goal setting. The school struggles to achieve a high level of parent involvement. Few students live close to the school, so traveling to school events is not easy for them. Some deaf students learn American Sign Language at school, which is based on English. However, the language used in their homes is Spanish, which adds a further challenge to establishing two-way communication between the school and parents.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient**

Teachers work hard to align the curriculum and State standards with assessment for instruction using American Sign Language and spoken English. American Sign Language is the key feature of the curriculum. It gives deaf students full access to the curriculum and enhances instruction by providing deaf and hearing students with opportunities to

become skilled and confident signers. All students receive instruction in a setting where interaction between general and special education students is accepted. This provides students with a strong basis to become effective members of a diverse society. All students like participating in arts and gym classes. Hearing students benefit from a music curriculum that is not available to deaf students. This limits the latter group's awareness of musical genres and experiences that many other deaf people can enjoy.

Work is continuing to ensure that lesson objectives are driven by data, as is conferencing with students to agree improvement areas that they need to focus on. The principal and school leaders have plans to implement differentiation next year, when teachers are more confident in understanding and applying data. During the review, much instruction was to the whole class with little evidence of differentiation. As a result, some of the needs of individual students are not being met and learning outcomes are limited.

Student attendance has increased through increased outreach work, but lateness remains an issue. Most students use public transport to get to school, which can lead to unexpected delays and late arrival. However, students who drift into classes after the start of lessons are not challenged enough by teachers which sets a precedence that does not encourage punctuality throughout the school day.

During the current year, some students were trained as peer mediators in an initiative to build greater trust and respect between adults and students. They are now used and valued by both adults and students when difficult situations arise but it is too early to see the full impact of this initiative.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has changed the way in which teachers receive ongoing professional development by establishing a United Federation of Teachers teacher center at the school. This means that a full-time coach is now available to support staff. Her regular informal classroom observations supplement the administrations' formal observations. There is no rubric for providing feedback after these, so staff are not always clear about their strengths, areas to develop or how their work aligns with teaching standards. While much information about the informal observations is discussed with the administration, the lack of a framework and clear improvement goals means that there is no structure to evaluate the impact of professional development on instruction consistently.

There are indications that a culture of sharing professional skills and expertise is emerging, but this is not yet fully established across the school. Consequently areas of professional strengths are not shared consistently or fully used as sources for professional development. The school values its partnerships with external organizations particularly those involved with the deaf and this allows all students to gain insights and understanding of the deaf community and culture.

Support and guidance staff provide on-site services for physical and occupation therapy, and they manage unacceptable behavior. As a result of the high level of staff assigned to patrol hallways and shared areas, the impact of disruptive incidents on learning for students throughout the building is minimized. The number of suspensions has risen this year as a result of rigid implementation of the school dress code.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.**

The school policy for gathering data is at an individual student level that limits the insights into patterns and trends into learning across the school. This in turn impairs the information for planning and monitoring. The administration is well informed about significant changes affecting the school, particularly in relation to phasing out the middle school from September 2008. However, there is no long-term plan which sets out the actions needed to bring about change and achieve a smooth transition. The number of students is falling and there is no strategy to encourage more deaf and hearing students to enroll. The staff and administration team acknowledge that the school's mission statement needs to be updated to reflect the current student population. The impact of the school leadership team on monitoring and planning is limited as meetings and the use of data are infrequent and other ways to improve how the team functions have not been explored.

The student goals set out in the Comprehensive Education Plan include measurable goals to indicate the progress of some students. These goals do not relate to all students and lack sufficient focus to raise learning across the school. Recently teachers have begun to set goals for themselves that relate to improving the learning environment, managing student behavior and some reference to improving instruction. However, these are not sharp and precise enough to permit systematic monitoring of progress through the year.

The newly established structure for regular meetings of teachers provides much needed opportunities for them to share information. They use this to modify their instruction with the aim of improving student learning. In addition, teachers have started to meet with an agreed focus of reviewing the progress of two students from both the middle and high schools. This is leading to consideration of the effectiveness of instruction and usefulness of assessments. Some teachers have taken the initiative and are in the early stages of creating assessment rubrics for specific areas. However, this work is hampered by the lack of detailed assessment, especially to track student progress in the acquisition of expressive and receptive American Sign Language.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b> American Sign Language and English Secondary School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>		X			

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?		X			
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?		X			
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?		X			
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?	X				
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?	X				
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?	X				
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?		X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>	X				

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?		X			
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?		X			
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?		X			
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?		X			
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?		X			
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?		X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X			

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?		X			
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?		X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?		X			
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?		X			
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?			X		
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					
			X		

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?		X			
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?		X			
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?		X			
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?		X			
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?		X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					
		X			

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>